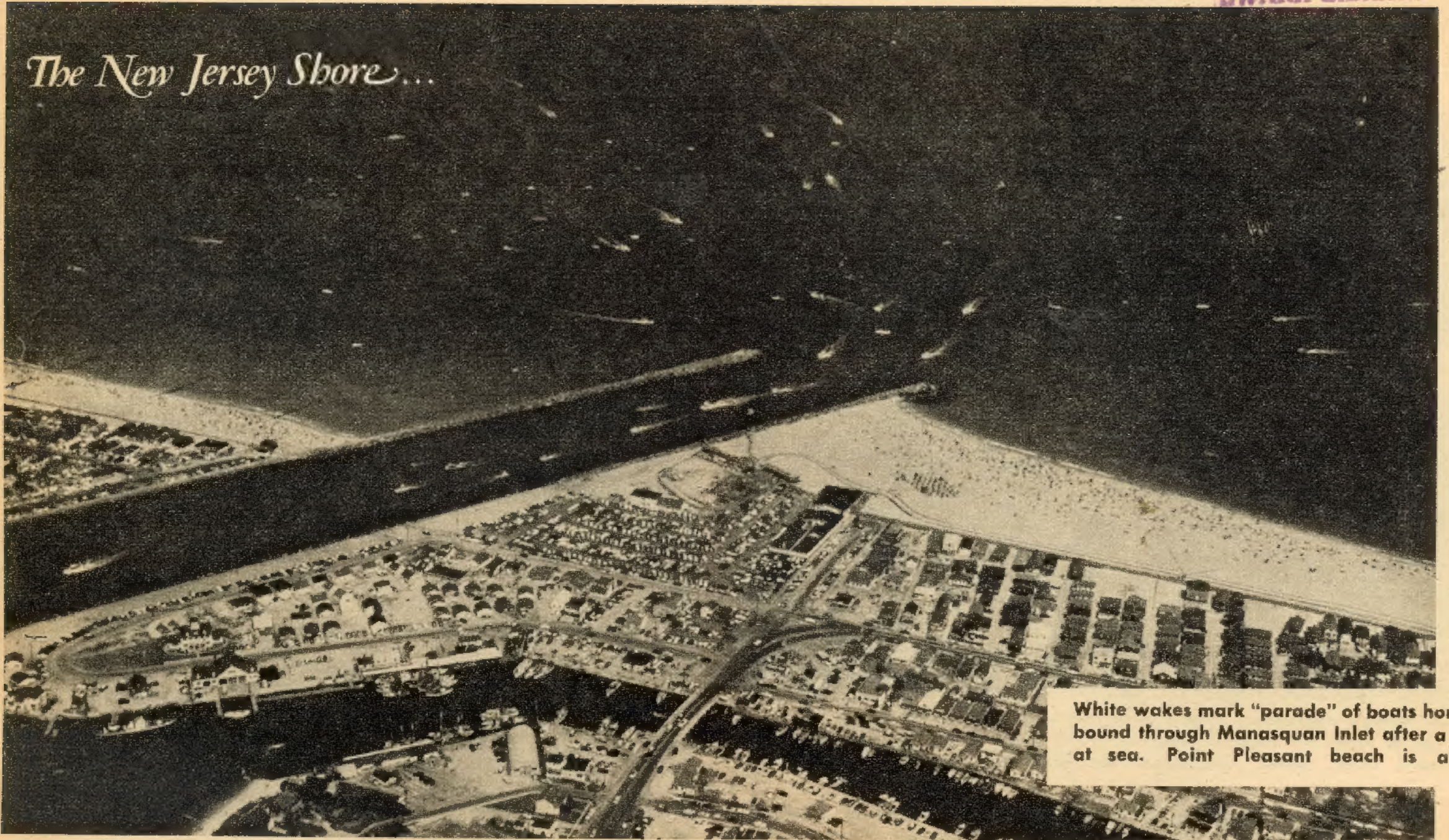


## The New Jersey Shore...



White wakes mark "parade" of boats homeward bound through Manasquan Inlet after a Sunday at sea. Point Pleasant beach is at right.

# INLET LAND

*Area Bordered by Manasquan and Shark River Passages to the Sea Provides Many-Splendored Things for Many People — From Yachting and Fishing Fans to Homeowners Seeking Relaxation*

By JOHN T. CUNNINGHAM

**M**ANY a modern wife waiting for the party fishing boats to come home must be excused for agreeing the Indians turned a neat phrase when they called a meandering Monmouth County stream "Manatahsquawhan."

A very simple name that: "Man-atah" for island, "squaw" for wife, "han" for stream. All together now—"Stream of the Island for Squaws," THE place to park wives while the wampum winners hunted and fished. Breathes there a fisherman's wife who doesn't feel a kinship with the squaws while the boats swarm outward to the fishing banks?

The "Manatahsquawhan" today is Manasquan River, and that sluggish stream combines with an up-coast neighbor, Shark River, to give 10 miles of seacoast between Bradley Beach and Point Pleasant a distinctiveness

found nowhere else along the New Jersey Shore. Manasquan and Shark River inlets set the tone.

Outward through those inlets on fair summer days pour thousands of deep-sea anglers bound for the Mud Hole, Shrewsbury Rocks, Squan Ridge, the Klondike and other favorite banks. Yachtsmen from Maine to Florida know Manasquan Inlet as the invitation to a long, protected run down through the Inland Waterway to Cape May and beyond.

**T**HE uniqueness of this Inlet Land stems from the unusual number of lakes and ponds so close to the Atlantic Ocean that a good outfielder easily could toss a clam shell from beach to lake shore. The lakes are in several instances frustrated inlets, held in place now by dikes.

Character is given the region by the lakes and inlets. At the same time they rather well define town limits:

Sylvan Lake is a mutual boundary for Bradley Beach and Avon-by-the-Sea. Shark River Inlet divides Avon and Belmar. Lake Como is between Belmar and Spring Lake. Wreck Pond differentiates between Spring Lake and Sea Girt. Sea Girt and Manasquan are kept apart by Stockton Lake. Glimmerglass Lake separates Manasquan and Brielle. Manasquan is only an inlet away from Point Pleasant.

The present rock-bound firmness of both Manasquan and Shark River inlets is a thing of the 20th century. In recorded time their outlets tended to shift regularly, as much as a half mile away from the present openings.

**M**ILLIONS of dollars have poured into both Shark River and Manasquan inlets during the past four decades. Keeping these exits to (and entrances from) the Atlantic open is a more-or-less full-time concern for the area; the inlets mean big business as well as big sport.

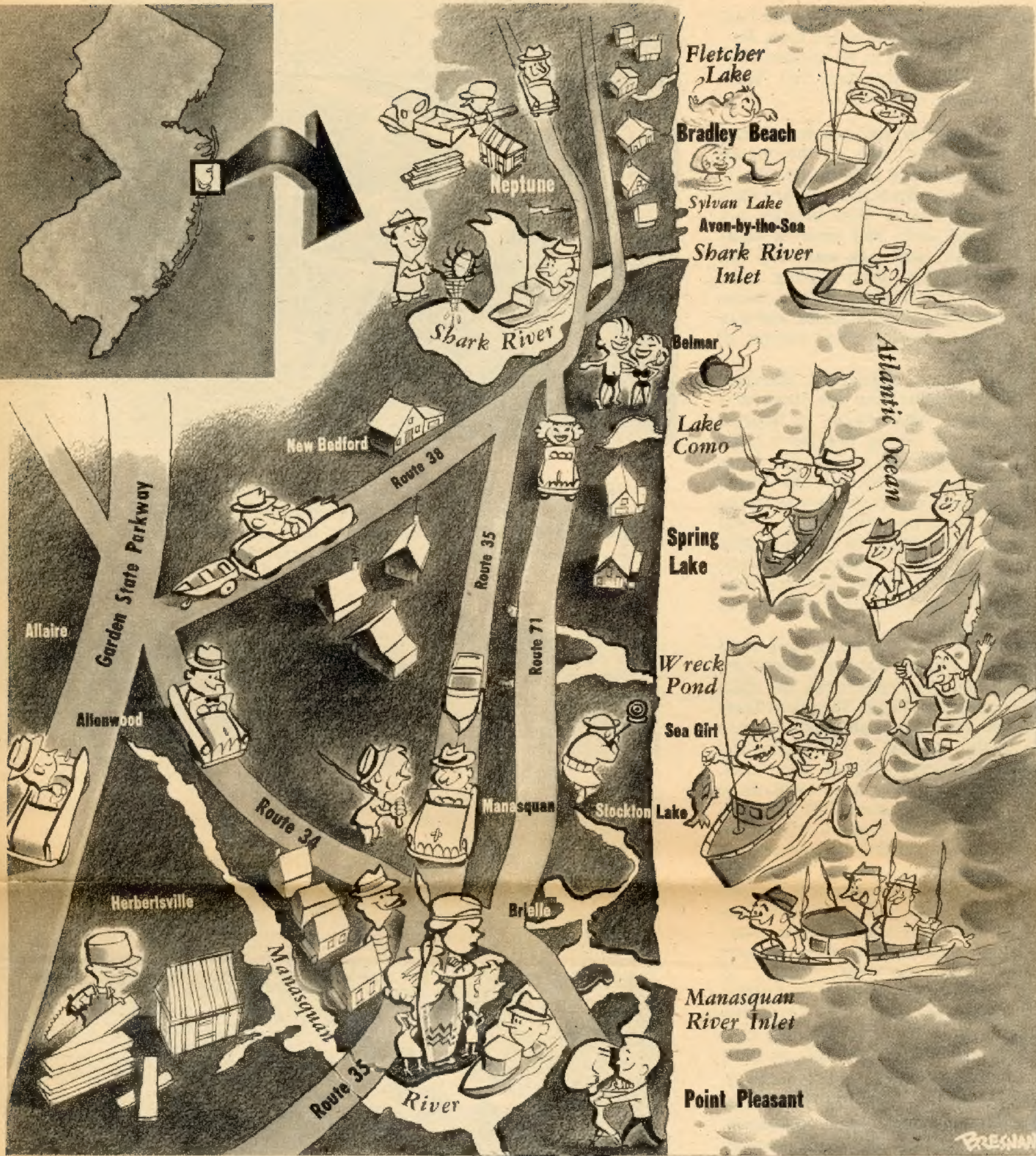
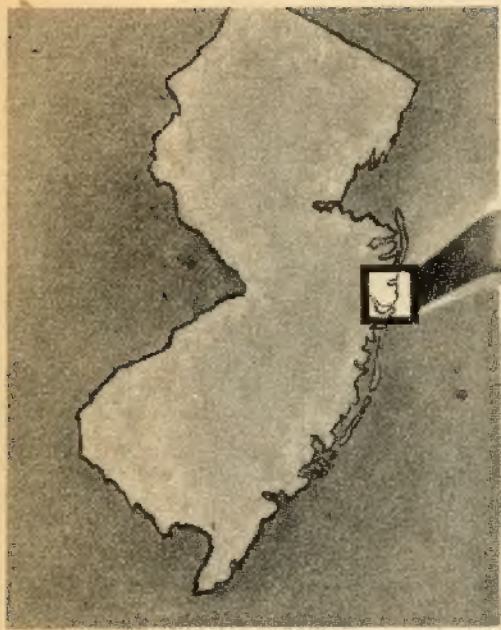
The entire Bradley Beach-Point Pleasant ocean frontage came to maturity between 1875 and 1890, given sustenance by the Jersey Central (New York & Long Branch) Railroad whistling down from the north. Not all credit for discovering Inlet Land belongs to railroad engineers and real estate developers. The Indians knew its charms long before the surveyor's transit and a quit-claim deed became handy devices for measuring progress.

Each year during August Point Pleasant pauses to pay agreeable and profitable homage to those braves and their ladies who long ago gathered for a traditional outing and/or squaw parking near the Manatahsquawhan.

Point Pleasant calls this annual rite Big Sea Day, and let it be emphasized that squaw parking is no longer common. Indeed, the female of the species is venerated to the extent that the fairest of them all becomes Miss Seafood Princess at the close of day. The Indians never went in for beauty queens, but then the backward Lenni Lenapes had a distressingly poor promotion department.

*This is the fourth of a series of articles on the New Jersey Shore. In the next installment, the writer will consider the Barnegat Peninsula from Bay Head to Island Beach.*





Big Sea Day deserves celebration, and all credit to Point Pleasant for reviving the fete. After the Indians found they no longer could get reservations at the white man's shore, farmers took up the redmen's custom, gathering near Wreck Pond in Sea Girl on the second Saturday of every August. The farmers, simple fellows, called their outing "Wash Day."

**F**ARM wagons covered the beach for nearly a mile on Wash Day. An 1894 account in Harper's magazine tells of 10,000 rustics on the strand, with "hucksters, sharpers and gamblers" willing and able to help farmers dispose of harvest profits. Farmers and their families swam either in the clothes they wore or changed into costumes which the Harpers correspondent said "were not for the better." If there was a Miss Seafood Princess in the lot, her charm remained well hidden in homespun.

Wash Day, Big Sea Day — call it what you will — was dying in 1894.

(Continued on Following Page)



Shark River Inlet, the Manasquan's upcoast "neighbor," divides Avon, Belmar.



# INLET LAND

(Continued From Preceding Page)

The man from Harpers wrote that 20 years earlier the crowds had been three times as large, "but the more recent settlement of the coast" cut the crowds drastically. Sea Girt had come a long way. The farmer eventually had to stay home; he was as unwelcome as the Indian.

Commodore Robert Stockton, Princeton Class of 1813 and U.S. Navy hero, gave Inlet Land its first social significance in 1852, the year he bought a huge oceanfront farm and named it Sea Girt. The commodore built his oceanfront mansion as much like a ship as possible, to give him the illusion of striding a deck at sea.

Tradition says Mrs. Stockton became too impressed with the ship-at-sea illusion. She insisted that the commodore build another home—"The Cottage"—somewhat back from the waves. There Mrs. Stockton and other landlubbers could enjoy a night's sleep, unperturbed by nightmares featuring a shiplike mansion carried out by the waves.

**ANNUAL** arrivals of the Stocktons from Princeton assumed some of the atmosphere of a circus coming to town. The commodore liked his family about him for the six weeks he spent at Sea Girt; trailing behind his carriage came a parade of vehicles laden with children, grandchildren, friends, servants and friends' servants. Somewhere in line trotted the blooded horses who would exercise all summer on the three-quarter-mile track at the Stockton grounds.

Commodore Stockton and some summer visitors at Manasquan almost had the entire beachfront from Long Branch to Long Beach Island all to themselves by Civil War time. Squan Village (Manasquan) had attracted boat builder William Brown in 1808, but by 1834 Gordon's Gazetteer could report Squan's boarding houses to be "much frequented for sea bathing."

Change came inevitably. The commodore sold his beloved Sea Girt to developers before his death in 1866. A group of Ocean Grove summer residents founded Ocean Beach (Belmar) in 1873 and two years later workers laid the tracks of the Jersey Central (New York & Long Branch) Railroad all the way to Manasquan.

Inlet Land expanded. James A. Bradley, founder of Asbury Park, established Bradley Beach in the 1870s, although he gave it only moderate personal attention until 1897. Philadelphia tobacco maker Edward Batchelor established Key East on the north bank of Shark River Inlet in 1878. Batchelor's town attracted tobacco-hating Baptists, who in 1883 started a camp meeting patterned after Ocean Grove. Nevertheless, when Key East in 1900 took the name Avon-by-the-Sea it lacked both tobacco maker and camp meeting.

Credit in large measure one Col. L. U. Maltby, owner of the Beach House at Sea Girt and two-thirds owner of the Monmouth House at Spring Lake, with keeping Sea Girt and Spring Lake just as Commodore Stockton would have liked them. In the 1880s the colonel approached the railroad with a

proposition: If the railroad could run a train to make the 56 miles from Jersey City to Sea Girt in 90 minutes the colonel would guarantee 150 Wall Street brokers to ride it.

**T**HE railroad agreed, but lengthened the time to two hours on the chance that some brokers also might like to get off at Long Branch or Asbury Park or such way spots. Most brokers put up with the extra half hour to enjoy the cherished pine, oak and holly forests surrounding their Spring Lake and Sea Girt homes, or the ultra-fashionable Monmouth, Essex and Sussex hotels near the clear waters of Spring Lake.

Spring Lake vacationists chuckled in the late 1880s over the story of a young swain who sought to impress an heiress by taking her for a daily row on the lake. He tossed gold coins into the clear waters and the lovers watched them settle all the way to the bottom. Alas for young love, a rival swam to the bottom to recover some of the coins—and revealed them to be but gilded poker chips. The rival won the heiress; the pretender didn't even get his chips.

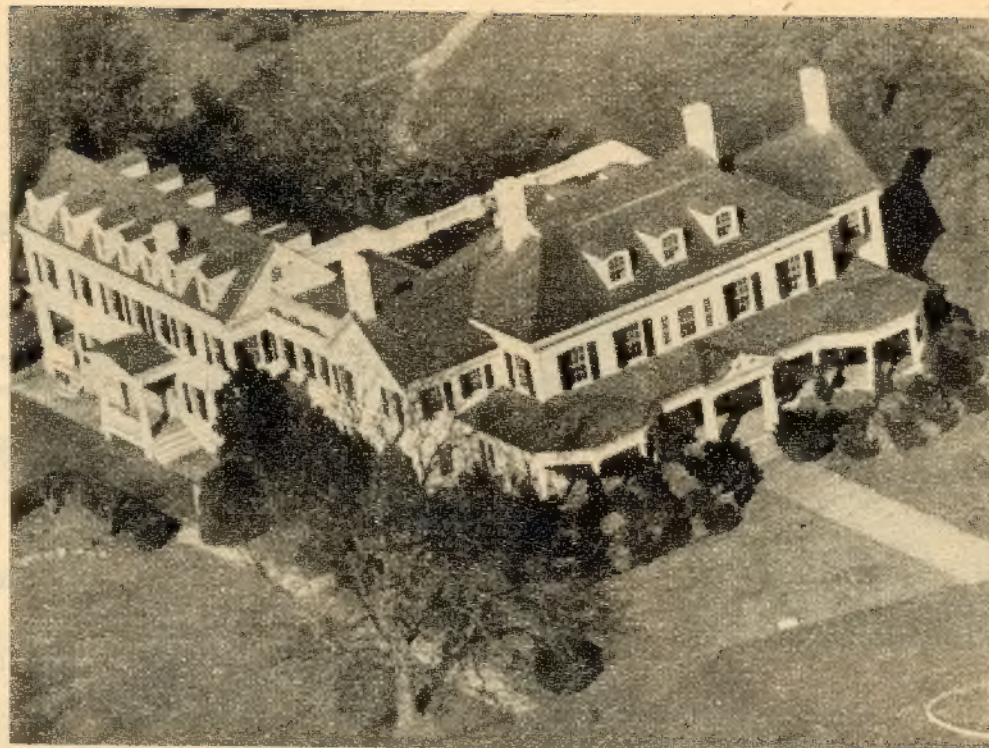
Shark River's far-famed soft shell crabs and oysters made it imperative to keep the inlet open since the shell fish needed salt water. The worst fears of commercial shellfishermen came to pass in the summer of 1877—shoaling sands completely closed the inlet. Shark River built up to a level three feet higher than normal behind the barrier. Shell fish began to disappear.

Volunteers worked desperately in August, finally succeeded in getting river water to trickle through the sand barrier on low tide. Quickly the pent-up river burst through the shoal, sweeping thousands of tons of sand along on what the "State Gazette" in August 1877 called "a swift and turbulent current far out to sea." Unfortunately sand returned to block the inlet on and off—even as recently as 1950.

**SHOALING** of Manasquan River Inlet had more serious implications because considerable ocean-going commerce came and went in the Manasquan as the tides changed. The U.S. government felt the situation serious enough in 1879 to invest \$39,000 in jetties on the north side of the inlet—and a condition had to be serious indeed for the U.S. government to invest \$39,000 in anything in 1879.

The investment might as well have been spent for a sand jetty, in large measure because a Spanish brig laden with iron ore ran aground in the channel in the late 1880s. She became "solid as a rock," a picturesque and sentimental sight for all but commercial shippers, fishermen and government jetty enthusiasts.

Sentiment had its moments, of course. Ailing author Robert Louis Stevenson visited Manasquan for six weeks in 1888 and while there wrote part of "The Master of Ballantrae" in the Union House (later burned). In his memory a patch of sand in the Manasquan is called Treasure Island. Across the inlet in Point Pleasant Beach thousands came by 1900 to enjoy the "wild shore and ocean scenery." Cottagers strolled the uncommercial strand. A 1902 historian said artists "yet come in the hope that the coast



"Little White House" at Sea Girt where New Jersey Governors summered until World War II halted custom. **RIGHT:** Spring Lake, which gave town its name, with the ultra-fashionable Monmouth Hotel on far shore.



storms of the previous winter have produced something new."

Happy days, those days of the 1890s when the artistic and the wealthy shared Inlet Land with the ever-dwindling ranks of Wash Day farmers and the ever-growing ranks of society seeking invitations to the Governor's Ball at the New Jersey National Guard encampment at Sea Girt.

**T**HE National Guard, finding its old rifle range at Elizabethport cramped, in 1885 rented land from the Sea Girt Land & Improvement Co. for \$3,000 annually. The state bought the grounds in 1891 and in 1907 enlarged its holdings to 165 acres—with 3,000 feet of ocean front, "affording the soldiery ample opportunity for healthful recreation in the water."

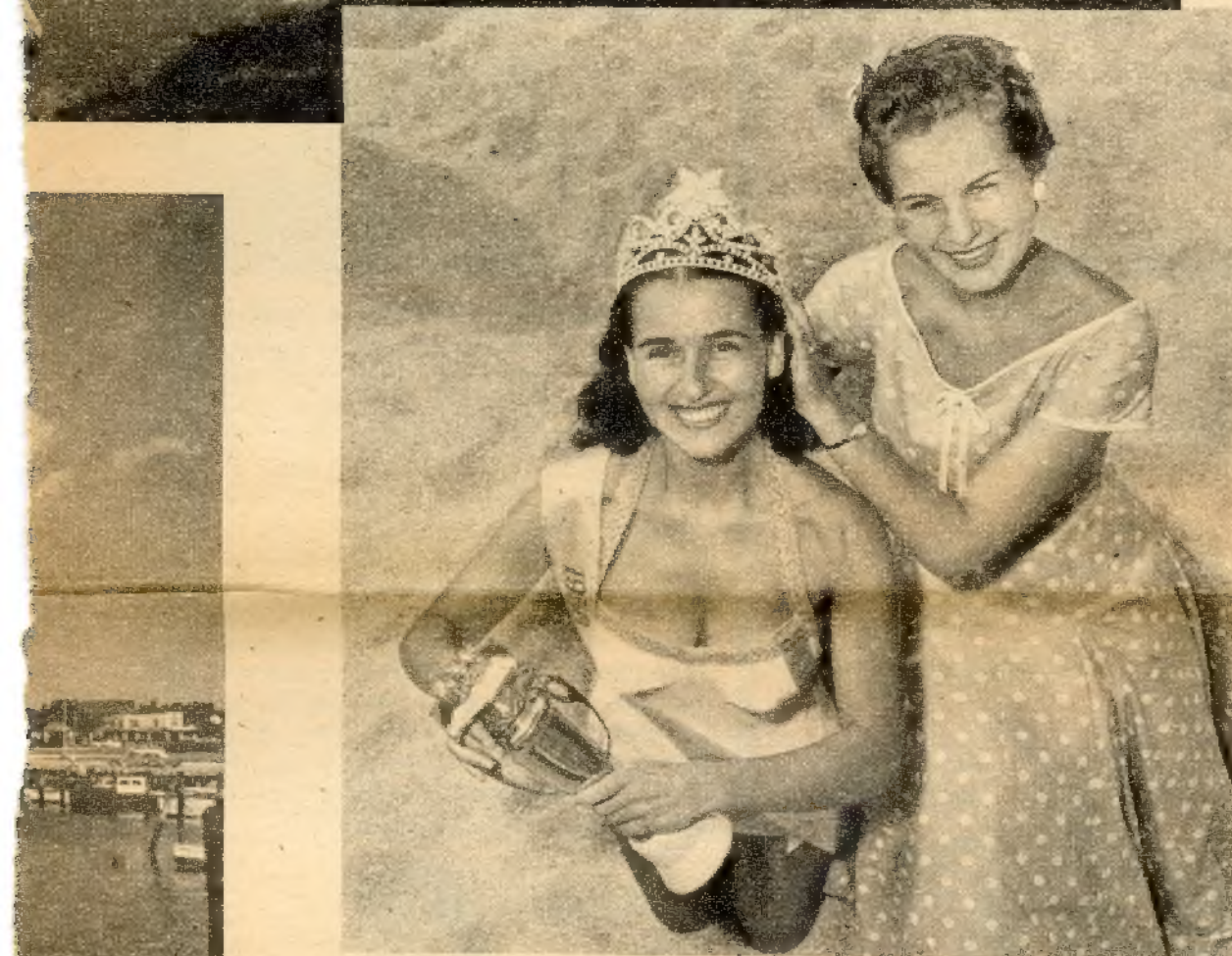
Soldiers on parade and at the firing range intrigued the citizenry, but the big thrill occurred on Governor's Day,

when New Jersey's chief executive came to inspect the troops. As Governor's Day turned into magic evening the Governor's Ball in the "Little White House" attracted socialites from all over the state and from New York and Philadelphia. The "Little White House" until 1906 was Commodore Stockton's old farmhouse (not the mansion) fronting on the roadway to the ocean.

In 1906 the state bought the New Jersey building at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis and moved it to Sea Girt as a replacement for the farmhouse. Governors usually summered at the Little White House until World War II. There Gov. Woodrow Wilson received word of his 1912 nomination as Democratic presidential candidate.

**G**OVERNORS and the faithful followers of both parties used the Little





Miss Seafood Princess of 1956 (Rosina Guadagnino of Plainfield), receiving crown from predecessor (Joan Mehok of Elberon). LEFT: Shark River boat basin at Belmar. Community was founded as Ocean Beach in 1873.

White House—and "used" is a reasonable two-edged word. Frank Hague and his colleagues made most spectacular use of the building and grounds, but year-in and year-out tabulations of bills showed Republican governors in their quiet ways managed to spend about as much money as the Democrats. Gov. Charles Edison rather well shuttered the Little White House in 1942 by questioning publicly a series of exorbitant Sea Girt bills.

The Little White House hasn't been the summer capitol since. Actually the Little White House began to assume Little White Elephant proportions by 1932, when first proposals were made to make the grounds a public park. Recently Gov. Robert Meyner revived the state park notion. Sea Girt residents show no marked enthusiasm for the park either in 1932 or 1955 it can be noted.

Regardless of the quiet times at Sea

Girt and Spring Lake and hoped-for increasingly busy times on the boardwalks at Bradley Beach and Belmar, it became clear by 1907 that no matter what else happened in Inlet Land, something had to be done about the inlets—particularly Manasquan Inlet.

Shark River had local import, true, for fishermen and boaters, but Manasquan Inlet posed a twofold challenge—to keep it open for the commercial and party boat fishermen and to visualize it as the northern entrance to a long protected waterway down through inland bays and thoroughfares to Cape May.

**I**N 1907, making sure it wouldn't break the taxpayers, the State Legislature allocated the modest sum of \$200 for a survey to plan ways and means to keep the inlet open and to estimate costs. Prof. Lewis M. Haupt carried out the survey with volunteers

and came up with as good a \$200 bargain as the state ever has gotten, summing up all that had gone before—and clearly proving the advantages of keeping both inlets open.

The following year work began on the Inland Waterway from Bay Head to Cape May and in 1925, after eight years of intermittent digging, a canal finally emerged to link the Manasquan River with Barnegat Bay. Thus yachtsmen could move into Manasquan Inlet from the open sea and proceed safely inside for 115 miles to Delaware Bay, always providing of course that the inlet stayed open.

Keeping the inlet open could be more easily said than done. Soon after the canal opened the inlet closed, and many said bitterly that the canal caused the closing by siphoning off water from Manasquan River. In August 1926 firemen and New Jersey National Guardsmen etched open a channel by shooting streams of water under pressure against the blocking sand. Soldiers walked off two days later when firemen left to parade in Belmar.

**T**HE inlet was choked completely in 1928 and 1929, but in 1930 work began on a joint federal-state-county-municipal project to dig a 400-foot-wide opening through solid sand dunes 10 feet high. Manasquan's familiar massive jetties date from that beginning, although they have been lengthened through the years. Ocean and river waters mingled through those jetties on Feb. 10, 1931, embracing in the height of the full-moon tide.

Shoaling continues intermittently in the inlet, but constant vigilance (and money) keeps the channel open. The word with yachtsmen and fishermen today is that Manasquan Inlet is first class.

Not only is the inlet relatively easy for skilled pilots to navigate, it also offers several sheltered places where boats may tie up either temporarily or permanently. Many yachts berth in the large square basin just off the south side of the inlet. Brielle boat basin, a mile inside on the north shore, is recognized as one of the nation's best boat basins.

The Manasquan River and inlet fishing center is said to be the largest in the world; Coast Guardsmen have counted more than 1,600 boats of all sizes leaving and entering Manasquan Inlet on a Saturday or Sunday. Return of the party fishing boats in late afternoon brings regular crowds down to the rocky jetties to watch the parade in from the sea.

**F**ISHING is the key word at Brielle, an attractive little haven founded in 1919 and named for Brielle, Holland. Heavily shaded avenues criss-cross in front of quiet homes with their green lawns, but what fisherman notices trees or lawns when he is outward-bound for the deep sea?

Fishermen on party boats gather in the early morning hours at the boat basins in Brielle and Point Pleasant and Belmar, ready to sail as soon after daybreak as possible. They go out in all seasons—for cod and pollack in the

winter, mackerel in the fall and spring, porgies, sea bass, fluke and other fish in the summer. Often the boats cross shipping lanes eight and 12 miles at sea in search of the elusive fish. Party boat fishing is a humming year-round Inlet Land industry; deep-sea fishermen know neither time nor season.

Inlet Land is as varied as the founding fathers could have hoped. Spring Lake, Sea Girt and Avon-by-the-Sea long ago declared themselves firmly against "fan fare amusements." They have none. Point Pleasant Beach, Manasquan, Bradley Beach and Belmar, on the other hand, see nothing wrong with amusements along the boardwalk—and many a young Sea Girt or Spring Laker or Avon-by-the-Seaer comes to town in season to agree.

Once this area largely looked to Philadelphia for its well-being. Indeed, an 1889 commentator declared that a shaking of the genealogical tree of the average Sea Girt or Silver Lake resident "would likely reveal a Binney or a Biddle"—good Main Line names. The automobile age has made such tree-shaking meaningless; northern New Jersey has been as close-as-Philadelphia for three decades.

Certainly the variety of Inlet Land is easy to catch:

It's the cottages surrounding the Point Pleasant boardwalk pavilions, the huge Brielle boat basin as viewed from the Rt. 34 bridge rising over the Manasquan River (and over Brielle). It's the Manasquan cottages set directly on the sand, their styling verging on the vintage. It's the National Guard encampment, the natural Sea Girt woods, the Silver Lake charm.

**B**EYOND the pillars at Spring Lake's northern entrance the character changes again. Often in Belmar and Bradley Beach the eye catches clusters of little cottages—very tiny cottages, mementoes of days when real estate men looked upon every acre as something to be sliced into the absolute minimum portions buyers would take.

The diminutive cottages could be the outgrowth of an influence by Ocean Grove's camp meeting establishment, where the lots needed to be only wide enough to accommodate a tent. Regardless of the reason, they are an interesting sight as they remain stubbornly in place, often in the shadows of very large hotels, large cottages or substantial business and amusement buildings.

Possibly Inlet Land is not due for a meteoric growth on the beachfront. Most of its towns which would like to expand have gone about as far as they can go; towns which have the room are by tradition not interested in growth. Expansion is likely to move out along the Manasquan and Shark rivers. There has been such growth, naturally; the emergence of Point Pleasant as a major shopping area attests to that.

Inlet Land thus is many things to many people—to yachtsmen coming off the Atlantic, a haven; to fishermen, a place to begin; for home owners, a place to relax in reasonable quiet; for boardwalk stand proprietors, a place to relax in reasonable din. Those squaw-parking Indians knew a good thing when they saw it.